



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**EVOLUTION IN THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP IN THE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND THE POTENTIAL  
IMPACT ON THE RECENT ENDEAVOR TO PROFESSIONALIZE  
THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis, I analyze how civil-military relations in the PRC have evolved during previous efforts to professionalize the military and examine the implications on contemporary analysis of civil-military relations. Current approaches to understanding civil-military relations in the PRC have focused on the professionalization of the military. However, lessons learned from similar episodes of professionalization in the PLA's past have not been fully incorporated into the current analyses.

I develop two case studies chosen at times when there was a prominent shift in the relationship between the CCP and PLA that negatively affected the push toward increased professionalization of the military. The first case study traces the growth and reversal to professionalization in the late 1950s while the second case study follows the professionalization trend through the 1980s and its dramatic reversal in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident. By comparing the key linkages between the CCP and PLA that allowed for the previous reversals of professionalization in the military, I highlight the consistencies among the different episodes in the PRC's civil-military history. Lastly, I expand on the implication of these findings on contemporary civil-military relations and its potential impact on current professionalization of the PLA.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteers
DIC	Discipline Inspection Commission
GLF	Great Leap Forward
GPD	General Political Department
NDL	National Defense Law
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have developed a unique relationship that has evolved over time. From 1949 to present day, the relationship between the Party and Army has evolved from one in which the CCP and PLA were nearly indistinguishable to a relationship that appears much more aligned to the division between the civilian-run state and professional military found in the West. While much attention has been directed at examining the dynamic relationship between the CCP and the PLA under the broad topic of civil-military relations, there has been limited effort in establishing the way in which civil-military relations have evolved in the PRC.

This thesis assesses how civil-military relations in the PRC have evolved during previous efforts to professionalize the military and examine the implications for contemporary civil-military relations. As discussed in the following literature review, the current approaches of “conditional compliance” and “state control” rely heavily on the role of professionalization of the military to conceptualize current civil-military relations. However, lessons learned from similar episodes of professionalization in the PLA's past have not been fully incorporated into current analyses of civil-military relations. The goal of this thesis is not to replace the current approaches to understanding civil-military relations, but to refine and potentially constrain the inputs of professionalization on the “conditional compliance” and “state control” approaches.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

In general, a great deal of academic research has been directed at China over the last three decades as the rapid economic, social, and military growth has placed China firmly among the major players in the international community. This sustained economic growth, which enabled China to surpass Japan in the summer of 2010 to become the world's second largest economy, has fueled a military modernization effort that may have

recently initiated the first test-flight for China's indigenously produced 5th generation fighter aircraft in January 2011 and sea trial tests on the PLAN's first aircraft carrier.<sup>1</sup> As civilian authorities and the PLA evolve with the changes, it is important to understand how their relationship has changed to get at the fundamental question of whether the new civil-military relations are stable.<sup>2</sup>

While these advances have gained attention on their own merit, the assertive actions off the Chinese coast in the South and East China Seas have amplified the interest in military affairs in China. Furthermore, significant events such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, the emergency landing of a U.S. EP-3 on Hainan in 1991, the Taiwan crisis of 1995–1996, the outbreak of SARS in 2002, and the J-20 test flight have all sparked academic probes into the relationship between civilian and military authority in the PRC. The goal in these studies has been to determine whether "the degree of civil-military cooperation and the level of civil-military conflict over foreign policy may have major implications for China's strategic behavior."<sup>3</sup>

Specific periods of civil-military relations over the course of the PRC's history have been extensively studied. While a consensus has not been reached over the exact nature of how civil-military relations have evolved, there is a recent trend in the literature that acknowledges and stresses the increasing levels of professionalization within the PLA. However, the challenge facing analysts of Chinese civil-military relations is to draw out the implications that the current trend towards higher levels of professionalization has had, or will have, on civil-military relations. This thesis contributes to current understanding by looking at the constraints that may limit the degree of professionalism in the context of current trends in China's civil-military relations.

Previous efforts to professionalize the PLA have been limited or interrupted for a variety of reasons. By looking at how the civilian-military relationship in China has

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<sup>1</sup> BBC News, "China's First Aircraft Carrier 'Starts Sea Trials.'" *BBC News Asia-Pacific*, 10 August 2011, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14470882](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14470882). Accessed 12 November 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Nan Li, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People's Liberation Army* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



evolved since 1949, this research exposes the mechanisms embedded in the CCP and the PLA organization that have allowed the CCP to alter the civil-military relationship while also disrupting attempts at professionalization. Therefore, if the same mechanism that has limited professionalism in the past persists in the current organization, it remains possible that the PLA's capacity to professionalize may become limited.

The current trend in contemporary studies of civil-military relations in China has increasingly focused on the enhanced role of the state, increased institutionalization, and the effects of professionalization. This research looks to ensure that past events are not inadvertently overlooked, without critical examination, in relation to the attention afforded to contemporary trends. It remains possible that the connection will fail to correlate strongly with civil-military relations in China today. But the aim is to recognize the significant and relevant events of China's past when trying to understand whether fundamental changes to the civilian-military relationship are underway in China.

Peter Feaver casts the challenge of civilian-military relations as a balance between control and effectiveness. The goal is to achieve "a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to do with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorize them to do."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the implications of this research extend to the endeavors of PLA analysts to understand the upper limits of military professionalization of the PLA in a China dominated by the CCP.

### **C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES**

Studies of the PLA since the establishment of the PRC encounter the general challenge of gaining access to information. The main challenge is the general inaccessibility of primary sources due to availability and language difficulties. Because of the isolation of China from the West in the PRC's early decades, relatively little first-hand information was available. As China opened to the West in recent decades, information has become increasingly available, but the lack of transparency with regard

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<sup>4</sup> Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz and the Question of Civilian Control." *Armed Forces & Society* 23 no 2 (Winter 1996): 149.

to political and military changes continues to challenge China analysts' ability to arrive at concrete conclusions. Therefore, studies of the PLA and CCP have had consistently to qualify their arguments with the proviso that more information is needed.

A separate challenge related to the relative lack of information available is that analysts have been left to infer connections through basic observations. As a result it is common for scholars to form different conclusions by looking at much of the same evidence, as confirmed by the variety of analysis available on the political motivations of the CCP as well as the intentions and capabilities of the PLA. As covered in the literature review, scholarly approaches have also varied widely in assessing the nature of China's civil-military relations. Thus, it is of primary importance to critically select the sources used for this study and maintain a healthy awareness for ambiguities among explanations.

Another issue is the variety of terms used in the literature on civil-military relations in general and on the unique nature of the relationship in China in particular. Each term is associated with distinct interpretations of the civil-military relationship and it is important to remember that they are not interchangeable. To avoid confusion, this thesis uses the term civil-military relationship to capture the general interaction of authorities within the CCP who are primarily civilian with those individuals in the PLA who are mostly military oriented. This thesis's use of civil-military terms found in the literature that relate to the conceptual approaches of civil-military relationships retains the features and characteristics previously developed by other scholars as presented in the literature review.

In looking at how civil-military relations have changed in the past, this thesis identifies the mechanisms and linkages through which civil-military relations have changed in China and explain the effect that this change has had on previous efforts to professionalize the PLA. Case studies of major junctures in civil-military relations in the history of the PRC, such as the dynamic events before, during and after the Great Leap Forward and the transformation that occurred in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Crisis, reveal the mechanisms through which the changes in civil-military relations were achieved. Because the function of the General Political Department (GPD) of the PLA

has been to act as an intermediary between the CCP to PLA, each case study examines the role that this institution has played. Furthermore, the changes in China's civil-military relationship that have coincided with reversals in the efforts to professionalize the military carry implications for the current effort to professionalize a PLA that retains the GPD as one of its major branches.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

While a variety of analytical approaches have been developed to understand civil-military relations in China, the origins for the study of civil-military relations are grounded in Samuel Huntington's book, *The Soldier and the State*.<sup>5</sup> In this book, Huntington develops several conceptual tools for use in the study of civil-military relations. However some of the concepts, such as the distinction between "subjective" and "objective civilian control" of the military, lack explanatory capability when examining China due to the unique political origins of the PLA. His definition of professionalism, however, has been widely accepted. Finally, Huntington's distinction between "subjective" and "objective" types of civilian control may not accurately capture the relationship between the PLA and the CCP in the past, but it may once again become relevant as the PLA has become increasingly subject to laws and regulations.

In *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington understands civilian supremacy over the military as either "subjective" or "objective civilian control." While subjective civilian control subordinates the military through indoctrination that encourages a unity of thought between society and the military, objective civilian control relies on the professionalization of the military to ensure the separation between civilian and military authority. Huntington believes that civil-military relations of every state may be described by employing this distinction. Leninist states such as China, Taiwan (prior to democratization), the Soviet Union, and Vietnam clearly fall under the subjective civilian control group, while liberal democracies, such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom exemplify objective civilian control.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 80–97.

The assumption in drawing separate categories of civilian control over the military is conceptually challenging to reconcile with the closely linked relationship between the CCP and PLA historically. Civil-military relations in the PRC closely parallel those in the former Soviet Union and employ many of the same control mechanisms, such as ideological persuasion and a political commissar system. However, unlike the Soviet Union, the Party and army in China have been inextricably linked through the civil war and more importantly upon the founding of the country in 1949. Scholars of civil-military relations in China recognize Huntington's contribution to the study of the PLA, but they have sought to re-conceptualize or adapt the category of subjective civilian control to apprehend more accurately the evolution of civil-military relations in the PRC since 1949.<sup>7</sup>

Recognizing China's unique relationship between the PLA and the CCP, the literature addressing civil-military relations in China includes several attempts to formulate theoretical approaches to understand these relations in China distinct from the broader study of civil-military relations founded by Huntington and debated by Janowitz, Moskos, and Feaver.<sup>8</sup> In general, Chinese civil-military relations have been understood in approaches focusing on factions, symbiosis, professionalism, party control, conditional compliance, and state control.<sup>9</sup> The relative importance of each model depends on the specific segment of time analyzed in the history of the PRC. What emerges from the literature review is a story of evolving civil-military affairs, with the importance of the

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<sup>7</sup> Harlan Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945–1981* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949–1964* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Paul Godwin, "Professionalism and Politics in the Chinese Armed Forces: A Reconceptualization," in *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, ed. Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978); and David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960); Charles C. Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces & Society* 4 no 1(1977): 41–50; and Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique," 149–178.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip C. Saunders, "Civil-Military Relations in China: Assessing the PLA's Role in Elite Politics," *Institute for National Strategic Studies, China Strategic Perspectives* 2 (August 2010): 1.

various approaches fluctuating in relation to events and to available information. While each model may be employed across PRC history, the following literature review synthesizes the approaches with relevant periods.

### **1. 1959–1969 Factionalism**

A factionalism approach, most notably argued by Monte Bullard, analyzes the interaction and competition among political factions within the elite of the CCP and PLA.<sup>10</sup> While factions dominated the political landscape during significant events in PRC history such as the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the power transition upon the death of Mao Zedong, it has become less useful as generational change has replaced the political and military elite. Following Michael Swaine's investigation of elite power relations, a crippling challenge to the factional model emerged as the effects of professionalism fundamentally changed Chinese civil-military relations.<sup>11</sup> However, as recently as 2005, Swaine retained and successfully utilized a portion of the factional model in his analysis of civil-military relations in the context of the 2003 SARS outbreak.<sup>12</sup>

### **2. 1949–1997: Symbiosis—the “Interlocking Directorate”**

Understanding party-army relations as a fusion of the civilian and military elites has also been strongly advocated in the literature. David Shambaugh's model of a dynamic symbiosis has been the most successful example of characterizing the various interwoven relations between the PLA and CCP since 1949. While he observes a struggle for control and increased autonomy between the CCP and the PLA, the essential symbiotic relationship of an "interlocking directorate" and political indoctrination has

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<sup>10</sup> Monte Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution: The Party and the Military in the PRC, 1960–1984* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* 33 no 8 (August 1993): 757–761.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Swaine, "Civil-Military Relations and Domestic Power and Policies" (paper presented at the Conference on "Chinese Leadership, Politics, and Policy," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., November 2, 2005), 10–11.

remained largely intact until the mid-1990s.<sup>13</sup> At this point, Shambaugh notes that the significant changes in China's civil-military relationship as a result of the bifurcation among elites and increased professionalization has fundamentally raised questions about the symbiosis of party and army and introduced the state into the power struggle in PRC politics.<sup>14</sup> Citing the importance of the introduction of the National Defense Law (NDL) in 1997 and subsequent 1998 Defense White Paper, Shambaugh suggests that the military is increasingly being placed under state control.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Andrew Scobell strongly endorses the new party-state-army dynamic.<sup>16</sup> However, the NDL has mostly muddled the picture of civilian and military relations in China because of its various references to both state and party control of the military. This, Shambaugh argues, has affected the symbiotic relationship of the party and army, but has not yet replaced it as an essential connection between the party and army.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. 1950–1958, 1985–1989, 1992–2010: Professionalism**

The professionalism model has been advanced in the early works of Ellis Joffe, Harlan Jencks, and Paul Godwin and remains particularly relevant in the literature on current civil-military relations in China.<sup>18</sup> During periods of modernization in the mid-1950s and the reforms initiated under Deng Xiaoping, professionalism has been emphasized in the PLA.<sup>19</sup> While this effort has not achieved the level of professionalism that Huntington envisioned, professionalism intertwined with various levels of politicization has been evidenced in the PLA's behavior in seeking autonomy and

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<sup>13</sup> David Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China: Party-Army or National Military?" *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 16 (2002): 11.

<sup>14</sup> Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China," 10–11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Scobell, "China's Evolving Civil-Military Relations: Creeping Guojiahua," *Armed Forces & Society* 31 no 2 (Winter 2005): 227–244.

<sup>17</sup> Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China," 25.

<sup>18</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*; Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*; Godwin, "Professionalism and Politics in the Chinese Armed Forces;" and Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces* (Maxwell Airforce Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> There was a brief, but significant interruption to civil-military relations and a reversal in the professionalization in favor of increased politicization of the PLA following the events in Tiananmen Square.

disengagement from "quasi-civilian responsibilities." <sup>20</sup> Joffe's analysis of the relationship between the CCP and PLA from 1949–1964 emphasized conflict emerging between the professional motivations of the military and the Party's traditional political orientation and the use of the PLA in non-military operations.<sup>21</sup> Over time, the professionalism framework lost explanatory power among PLA analysts in analyzing civil-military relations. By 1996, Joffe began incorporating the symbiosis and the party control models as supplementary approaches to better understand the evolving nature of civil-military relations. "Party-army relations in China have been marked by contradictory characteristics," Joffe noted.<sup>22</sup> Depending on the specific instance being analyzed, certain characteristics of civil-military relations are better characterized by the professionalization approach, but other aspects were more accurately captured in the symbiosis approach. Thus Joffe concludes that civil-military relations are in tension, and that elements of professionals and symbiosis are useful in understanding relations between the Party and the army. This powerful observation offers a useful perspective, suggesting that the main characteristics of more than one model may overlap rather than operate to the exclusion of each other.

#### **4. 1985–2010: Party Control**

Efforts to analyze civil-military relations through looking at mechanisms of party control over the military are also reflected in the literature. Notable efforts, such as that by Nan Li, have investigated the organizational changes within the PLA that serve as the foundation for party control.<sup>23</sup> Shambaugh has also employed aspects of the party control model to explain the gradual transformation from party-army relations that were strongly symbiotic during the revolutionary struggle and the early years of the PRC to one which remained symbiotic, but became increasingly characterized by party control of the PLA.

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<sup>20</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 178.

<sup>21</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army, 1949–1964*, 149.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis Joffe, "Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect," *The China Quarterly* 146 (June 1996): 300.

<sup>23</sup> Nan Li, "Organizational Changes of the PLA, 1985–1997," *The China Quarterly* 158 (June 1999): 314–317.

## **5. 1999–2010: Conditional Compliance and State Control**

The two contemporary approaches that capture the most recent characteristics of China's civil-military relations are termed "conditional compliance" and "state control." The conditional compliance approach, developed by James Mulvenon and You Ji, emerged to explain the current civil-military relationship in China as a more equal relationship in which bargaining and "interest sharing" have emerged as major variables alongside professionalism.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, as the state institutions continue to expand and develop patterns among them, bureaucratic models of analysis may become increasingly useful. The state control model advanced in more recent works by Shambaugh and Scobell emphasizes the increased legislation and regulation that governs the PLA. Arguing that there has been a complete bifurcation of the elite regarding positional and personal ties between the party and the army combined with the increased autonomy of the PLA as a result of increased professionalization, the linkage between party and army has been weakened. In conjunction with the major changes espoused in the 1997 National Defense Law and the proliferation of military regulations, the state control model introduces the PRC state as a major factor in China's civil-military relations and envisions that a three-way power struggle is underway in contemporary China.<sup>25</sup>

## **6. Attempts at Comparative Studies**

Because of the political structure of Leninist party-states in which single party control permeates all of government, comparative studies have been limited to Taiwan, Latin America and former communist states in Eastern Europe.<sup>26</sup> While comparative studies have achieved inconclusive results, these efforts have proven useful for some periods in China's political evolution. However, democratization in Taiwan and the end of the Cold War have severely limited the applicability of these studies to civil-military

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<sup>24</sup> You Ji, "Hu Jintao's Consolidation of Power and His Command of the Gun," in *China into the Hu-Wen Era: Policy Initiatives and Challenges*, ed. John Wong and Lai Hongyi (Singapore: World Scientific, 2006), 44–45.

<sup>25</sup> Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China," 22–23; and Scobell, "China's Evolving Civil-Military Relations," 227–244.

<sup>26</sup> Hsiao-shih Cheng, *Party-Military Relations in the PRC and Taiwan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990).



relations in China. Unlike Taiwan, there is little indication of a process of true democratization occurring within China.<sup>27</sup> And while studies of civil-military relations in other communist states of Herspring and Volges, Adelman, and Currie provide insight at aspects of China's civil-military relations, the significant changes since the end of the Cold War limit their utility to understanding only particular periods in the evolution of civil-military relations in China.<sup>28</sup> Not only have the former communist states dramatically changed since 1989, but political changes in China also contributed to the decline in the usefulness of older comparative studies. As the "dual-role elite" has gradually deteriorated in China as a result of the generational change in leadership and the development of separate career paths, a clearer distinction between the ruling party elite and military elite has become more apparent.<sup>29</sup>

## **7. Huntington Revisited**

The political evolution in China has also re-invigorated interest in the work of Huntington as his definition of professionalism has become widely employed in the literature addressing civil-military relations in China. While using professionalism to explain the degree of involvement of the military in civilian politics has been displaced by other variables such as "changes in the government's political legitimacy, level of economic development, state capacity, and the international normative and material structures," Huntington's definition of profession as distinct from vocation has enjoyed a resurgence in the study of civil-military relations in China.<sup>30</sup> As analysts of PLA developments have followed recent developments in PLA modernization and professionalization, Huntington's definition of professionalism in terms of expertise, responsibility and corporateness has been widely cited.

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<sup>27</sup> Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Dale R. Herspring, and Ivan Volgyes, ed. *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978); Jonathan Adelman, *Communist Armies in Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); and Kenneth Currie, *Soviet Military Politics* (New York: Paragon House, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives* (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 2001), 12.

However, Huntington's assertion that professionalism results in a depoliticized military is not without critics. A distinct challenge is found in Alfred Stepan's reconceptualization of the nature of expertise in modern militaries.<sup>31</sup> Developing countries, such as those in Latin America and Southeast Asia have relied heavily on the military to govern at times when the state apparatus was too weak to govern. Examples such as Suharto in Indonesia, the multiple military coups in Thailand, and the military junta that came to power in Myanmar in 1962 testify to the unique role of a professional military in developing countries. Thus, Stepan's argument can be extended beyond Latin America when expanding the definition of modern professionalization in the military to include an element of politicization in addition to the management of violence on behalf of the state. In essence, internal security and national development have also been incorporated into the conception of the modern military profession.<sup>32</sup>

## **8. Conclusion**

In summary, while the study of civil-military relations in China is grounded in the work of Samuel Huntington, his conceptions of "subjective" and "objective civilian control" of the military have been altered to fit the reality of China's unique history. Nevertheless, his definition of professionalism has been widely used in the analysis of civil-military relations in China.

A consensus has emerged among the most persuasive studies that the relationship between the CCP and PLA has evolved over time. However, conceptualizing the exact nature of the relationship has remained contentious as seen in the variety of approaches in the literature. Part of the issue is the dynamic nature of both the politics of the CCP and the various functions that the PLA has performed in the PRC since 1949. This review has sought to consolidate the various positions in an inclusive fashion in order to highlight the specific model that best portrays the party-army relationship at specific periods in the evolution in China's civil-military relations.

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<sup>31</sup> Alfred Stepan, "The New Professionalism of Internal Warfare and Military Role Expansion," in *Authoritarian Brazil*, ed. Alfred Stepan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 47–68.

<sup>32</sup> Stepan, "The New Professionalism of Internal Warfare and Military Role Expansion," 47–68.

## **E. METHODS AND SOURCES**

The goal of this thesis is to develop an approach that maintains some continuing relevance to analysis of civil-military affairs in China today and in the future. Thus, the method of research for this thesis will proceed through the development of two case studies chosen at times when there was a prominent shift in the relationship between the CCP and PLA that negatively affected the push toward increased professionalization of the military. Furthermore, these case studies have been selected from different times to reflect different civil-military relationships since the establishment of the PRC. Therefore, the case studies develop continuities in analyzing how the civil-military relationship not only evolved, but countered trends towards professionalization.

This thesis rests principally on secondary sources. In addition to the work of the scholars covered in the literature review, secondary sources have also been consulted for each case study to ensure that the case study events are accurately summarized.

## **F. OVERVIEW**

This first chapter has posted the general thesis question and sketched the relevant literature. The subsequent two chapters develop the case studies, detailing the dynamic political and military developments in each instance. A concluding chapter summarizes the similarities and contrasts between the case studies in order to extrapolate pertinent lessons that may be carried forward to understand current and future developments in civil-military relations in the PRC.

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## **II. CASE STUDY I: 1959**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

The first turning point in civil-military relations in the PRC to be considered centered on the removal of Peng Dehuai as defense minister in 1959. Beginning with the need to establish a more conventional military following the founding of the PRC in 1949, professionalization in step with military modernization became increasingly important. Lessons derived from the experience of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) in the Korean Peninsula from 1950 to 1953 accelerated and confirmed the need to professionalize the PLA. As the professionalization trend continued through the late 1950s with rough alignment between the ruling elites of the CCP and the increasingly professional officers of the PLA, there evolved a gradual, but dramatic, shift in civil-military relations that saw an increase in political control at the expense of continued professionalization of the armed forces.

As the effects of professionalization of the PLA came into conflict with its revolutionary roots and the implementation of Communist policy, a cleavage among the ruling elite began to emerge. To understand the nature of this civil-military shift in China, it is necessary to understand the viewpoints and origins of the opposition to those favoring professionalization of the PLA. While professionalism dominated the understanding of civil-military relations in China through 1959, factionalism among the ruling elite began emerging in the mid-1950s as professionalization conflicted with communist policy and the views of some of the revolutionary elite. By the mid-1950s, Mao began urging the PLA to return to its guerrilla warfare roots and non-military activities to facilitate economic growth, which encountered resistance among those advocating a professionalized officer corps.

Exacerbating the tension between the professionalization trend and the revolutionary roots within the PLA were a confluence of international and domestic factors. Internationally, the increasing tension in the Sino-Soviet relationship began encouraging a more independent and pragmatic vision by the CCP elite that eventually led to the implementation of a renewed "people's war" strategy. Domestically, as the

Great Leap Forward (GLF) began to falter and economic ruin threatened the country, the ruling elite was forced to decide between the mutually exclusive directions of politicization or professionalization.

The importance of the resulting shift is to explore the ways in which the CCP affected a shift from professionalization to politicization of the PLA. Understanding the organizational restructuring, political transformation, and policy changes is crucial to developing an answer as to how civil-military relations evolve. Clearly visible was the reshuffling of the Party and PLA elite through Peng Dehuai's removal and subsequent replacement by Lin Biao in 1959. At lower levels of the PLA the interlocking directorate was revamped to promote the resurgence of political concerns in the military apparatus through re-instituting the political control system of party committees, and strengthening the ability of the political commissars to penetrate the PLA.

## **B. PROFESSIONALIZATION**

With the founding of the PRC in 1949, it was imperative to transition the PLA from a guerrilla fighting force into a more conventional force capable of national defense and security. Because of the shared background and nearly identical functions of the revolutionary CCP elite as both military commanders and political leaders, there was little distinction or difference in their political agenda or military views.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, a largely unified effort bridging political and military concerns concentrated on military modernization of the PLA.

The initial efforts to craft a more modern military in the first years of the PRC were widely supported by the political elite. In order to achieve a modern military force, it would be necessary to develop a highly skilled officer corps capable of managing the modern equipment.<sup>34</sup> Initially heeding Mao Zedong's call in 1950 for the PLA to modernize "on the basis of its existing foundations and through adopting the advanced experiences of the Soviet Union," the PLA began to professionalize.<sup>35</sup> In 1950, the GPD

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<sup>33</sup> Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps 1949–1964* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Communist China 1949–1959: Volume I* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1961), 2.

promptly established entrance requirements, guidelines, and length of school programs to achieve qualification within the PLA in the newly distinguished military specialties of naval, tank, aviation, artillery, and air defenses.<sup>36</sup> By observing that the CCP leadership was united in pursuing both a modern and professional military, it becomes apparent that the effort to professionalize the PLA was not founded in opposition to the party, but was a result of the Party's direction.

## **1. The Korean War**

Through the first years of the PRC, the trend towards professionalization proceeded without encountering any major obstacles. As the CPV confronted the UN forces on the Korean peninsula, shortcomings of the Chinese military were made readily apparent to the commander, Peng Dehuai. A lack of a reliable logistic supply chain and the absence of Chinese air power compromised any advantage that CPV mobility and troop strength provided. Realizing that modern weaponry could cripple any offensive effort by the technologically inferior CPV, PLA officers would seek to correct the PLA's inadequacy.<sup>37</sup>

Soviet support continued to provide military equipment while Soviet advisors helped organize the PLA into a modernized and professional fighting force.<sup>38</sup> Domestically, the ruling elite of the CCP continued to advocate military modernization and recognized the need for professionalization of the PLA. Zhu De echoed this sentiment in 1952 when advocating that PLA training concentrate on educating military members on the use of technical equipment to effectively operate the increasingly modern equipment of the newly established Army, Air Force, and Navy.<sup>39</sup>

By transforming the emphasis of training toward the technical proficiency within the PLA, a shift from the heavy political focus of a typical basic training day in the PLA would be required. According to an interview gathered from a Chinese prisoner of war

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<sup>36</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 19–20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 11–12.

<sup>38</sup> John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 144..

<sup>39</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 2.

during the Korean conflict, over five hours, or half of the productive day, were allocated for political indoctrination emphasizing Communist goals while no time was set aside for technical or professional training.<sup>40</sup>

By 1953, the concrete examples of China's modernization effort of the PLA had become visible. Both the Navy and Air Force had been established, and the PLA had been transformed from an infantry army to a mechanized land force with both sea and air support.<sup>41</sup> In order to keep pace with modern weapons and learn new tactics, the deputy director-general of the GPD, Hsiao Hua, advocated a continuous focus on tactical and technical training through a heavy emphasis on education of military science from the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup>

After the Korean War, professionalization came to the forefront of priorities for the PLA. Following the People's Daily article in 1954 that stressed that the central task of the PLA was on modernization and the training of the officer corps, two fundamental changes occurred which accelerated the professionalization of the PLA.<sup>43</sup> The Communist regime instituted compulsory military service in 1955 and it formally introduced the Military Service Law.<sup>44</sup> Thus all male citizens at the age of eighteen were now required to enter military service, and a professional officer corps would be established to not only increase technical specialization, but also facilitate the training of the large numbers of conscripts.<sup>45</sup>

Together, these changes signaled an organizational shift from the "egalitarian, irregular, and informal guerrilla officer to the status-conscious, routinized, and formalized professional officer corps."<sup>46</sup> Fields of specialization were established and officer ascension with an emphasis on technical and professional competence was

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<sup>40</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, and Pio D. Uliassi, *Adjustment of Chinese Soldiers to the Communist Demand for Ideological Participation: An Exploratory Study Based on the CCF in the Korean War* (Washington D.C.: George Washington University, Human Resources Research Office, 1959), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>45</sup> Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army*, 148–152.

<sup>46</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 34.



emphasized for advancement. Notably, the regulations established a sequence of fourteen ranks in the officer corps and required officers to wear shoulder boards and insignia to display their rank. The establishment of ranks promoted efficient organization and developed a professional officer corps capable of administering the large number of conscripts about to surge into the PLA as a result of the Military Service Law. Development of the professional officer corps also contributed to specialization and technical competence which translated into more capable management of the increasingly modernized equipment.<sup>47</sup>

Accompanying the change from an egalitarian to a stratified officer corps, the officers were allocated cash payments according to their rank to replace their previous food subsidy and small allowance.<sup>48</sup> Additionally the officer corps was functionally divided into classes of officers according to their professions.<sup>49</sup> While these changes were not as transformative, they highlighted the degree to which policy formulated by the party elite was concentrated on the full transformation of the PLA to a professional force in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War.

As professionalization of the PLA served to strengthen the position of the military commander, the role of the political commissar was hindered by the lessons learned from experience in the Korean War. Because the conflict was waged on foreign soil, commissars were unable to successfully mobilize the population because language and cultural differences between the CPV and civilian Korean population. The barriers to communication prevented the commissars from establishing unity of effort, and as a result the PLA learned that in foreign wars, political commissars were ineffective in establishing a link between the army and society. As a result, military commanders afforded less and less attention to the marginalized political commissars, thereby weakening their organizational position within the PLA.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 35–36.

<sup>49</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 47.

## **2. Continuing Professionalization**

Through a gradual process of institutionalizing a professional officer corps in the military, the focus directed at the military's professional and technical education perpetuated professionalization after the momentum from the Korean War lessons subsided. Therefore, General Peng Shaohui, deputy inspector-general of military training, advocated in 1956 for the expansion of professionalization of academic and technical studies through establishing research and training in military science while expanding scholarships for studies and postgraduate opportunities. Ultimately, this direction would ensure a new and larger professional officer corps developed within the PLA.<sup>51</sup>

As education in the PLA forced the military academies to swell, the desire for increased professionalization became institutionalized by the military academies. Thus, the emphasis of the president of the Academy of Military Sciences, established in 1958, continued to emphasize the latest scientific and technical developments through learning applicable lessons from the Soviet Union for use in the PLA's modernization.<sup>52</sup>

The important observation of professionalization after mid-1950 is to observe that the focus on education of the officer corps to professionalize persisted. Additionally, as officers continued their military indoctrination that favored professionalization and modernization, the number of officers within the PLA with the same general outlook expanded as well. While the number of officers that favored professionalization is unknown, the increasing amount of editorials directed at the less desirable side effects associated with the professionalization of the PLA indicate that it grew increasingly worrisome for the Communist elites.

### **C. EMERGENCE OF FACTIONS**

The main political schism that began emerging in the CCP elite formed on the debate centered on the correct tack for the CCP to pursue as it sought to build and strengthen the PRC. On one hand, there were prominent members of the party elite that

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<sup>51</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

avored development based on pragmatic, economic reforms. However, these party reformers came in conflict with the remainder of the political elite that favored the building of socialism and socialist institutions prior to further economic progress.<sup>53</sup>

With the modernization and professionalization of the PLA formally underway in 1955, there was an effort by the CCP leadership to begin curbing the effects of professionalization on the attitudes of the PLA officers. Professionalization through the introduction of ranks, increased technical and professional education, and modernized equipment led PLA officers into developing attitudes that conflicted with those of the revolutionary elite that remained centered on CCP control of an egalitarian PLA.

#### **D. PROFESSIONALIZATION AFFECTING POLITICIZATION**

As the officer corps transformed itself into a more modern and capable force, they began developing distinctly independent viewpoints from that of the traditional revolutionary elite that had brought the CCP into power.<sup>54</sup> The tension of military modernization was fairly subtle in that both the political elites and military officers sought professionalization and modernization as a priority, but the political views associated with the professionalized officer corps came to challenge the fundamental "doctrine, characteristics, and practices of the army."<sup>55</sup>

Professionalization advocates believed that modern warfare required a shift in emphasis from reliance on the revolutionary individual to dependence on modern machinery and weapons operated by trained professionals. Conflicting with this view was the revolutionary elites concept of "people's war," which relied on mass mobilization and socialist and egalitarian principles to successfully conduct war. In this struggle between the military professionals and party elite, the presence of a factional divide can be observed by mid-1950.

In 1955, the director of the GPD, Lo Ronghuan, accused PLA officers of abandoning "democracy," neglecting the practice of persuasion, and mistreating troops because the preferential treatment afforded to the officer corps had encouraged officers to

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<sup>53</sup> Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution*, 89.

<sup>54</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, ix–x.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

abandon the revolutionary way of thinking.<sup>56</sup> This critique which can be generalized as abandoning democracy and the mass line in favor of professionalization and regularization of the PLA continued to be echoed by leaders of the PLA.

As a part of the anti-rightist campaign following the Hundred Flowers campaign, Mao's speech on the resolution of contradictions among the people set the tone for the 1957 anti-dogmatism campaign that the GPD would subsequently adopt and formalize within the PLA.<sup>57</sup> Coincidentally, the PLA began to recognize the conflicting viewpoints of the revolutionary elite that emphasized political indoctrination with that of the professionalized PLA's bureaucratic self-interest. Reactions against the professionalized officer corps that exhibited elements of bureaucratism, sectarianism, and subjectivism became more common from the PLA leadership.<sup>58</sup>

Notable reactions included the accusation by the deputy director of the GPD in 1956 that officers were guilty of abusing soldiers, neglecting both democracy and the mass line, while favoring professionalization and emphasizing science and technology.<sup>59</sup> In the same year, the GPD began mandating that officers in the PLA take political and theoretical courses and instituted a political exam as a requirement for subsequent promotion.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, Marshal Peng Dehuai, at the Eighth National Congress of the CCP in 1956, straddled the factional divide by stressing the need to raise political consciousness as well as technical ability of the commanders to be effective in modern warfare.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army*, 189.

<sup>57</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 119–120.

<sup>58</sup> For a list of definitions, see Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army*, p.120.

<sup>59</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>61</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 51.

## **E. EXTERNAL FACTORS**

### **1. Great Leap Forward**

Adding to the factional divide between the professionalization and politicization of the PLA was the shift toward economic priorities over efforts to modernize the military. In 1956, Mao directed the Chinese economy toward developing its industrial base prior to developing defense industries.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the GLF deprived the PLA of the precious economic resources it needed to proceed on the path towards modernization. As a result, the ensuing competition for resources between economic growth and military modernization exacerbated the already growing gap between the military professional viewpoint and the political direction of the CCP.

In order for the PLA to more effectively operate in civilian society, a return to the traditional role of the political commissar was required as the key liaison element between the civilian population and the military. Therefore, as the importance of the political concerns strengthened the commissar's position relative to that of the political commander, the GLF's isolationist policies also helped the faction that favored politicization of the PLA over that of professionalization.<sup>63</sup> Because of this internal disagreement on the basic orientation of the PLA that cut between both the Party and military elite, the Party elite was able to facilitate a return to political control of the PLA.

### **2. Sino-Soviet Tensions**

Individuals that favored professionalization of the officer corps to modernize the military gradually distanced themselves from an emphasis on politics or the masses from the revolutionary struggle. However, the international context shifted from a Sino-Soviet partnership in the mid-1950s towards eventual isolation in the international environment and opposition to both of the superpowers. Thus the political leadership was increasingly pressured to advocate policies of economic and military self-reliance.

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<sup>62</sup> Paul Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1988), 18.

<sup>63</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 52–53.

Economically, the realization that China would become internationally isolated motivated the GLF policies which mandated a greater effort on collectivization and political mobilization to produce growth. The emphasis on advanced agricultural collectivization also fueled Sino-Soviet tensions as the Chinese economic development veered from the Soviet model of increased industrialization. Militarily, a return to the "people's war" strategy was adopted as international support on the modernization effort was withdrawn. The ensuing military strategy would rely on greater mobilization of the masses through a re-invigorated militia, while the PLA returned to its guerrilla roots of civic involvement.

In 1958, the Taiwan Strait crisis also helped drive a wedge between the PRC and the Soviet Union. Shelling of the islands without Soviet consent was ultimately a test of Soviet commitment to the Sino-Soviet Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. As tensions rose between China and the Soviet Union, advocates of military professionalism were the most concerned. Not only was access to military technology and equipment threatened, but there became a distinct possibility that China would be left without assistance in securing a nuclear weapon and lose its strategic ally that could provide a nuclear deterrent.<sup>64</sup>

## **F. REVERSAL OF PROFESSIONALIZATION**

Confronted with ineffective economic policies of the GLF and further political intrusions into the professionalization of the PLA, Peng Dehuai expressed his dissent at the Lushan plenum of the Central Committee in 1959.<sup>65</sup> Because Peng's critique and viewpoint represented a critical attack on the party, he was accused of being against the Party and found guilty of "military professionalism."<sup>66</sup> However, because his critique also mirrored the interests of the Soviet Union, Peng Dehuai's critique of the Party represented a much more damaging attack against the legitimacy of the CCP to govern China, and ultimately resulted in his removal as the Defense Minister.

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<sup>64</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 101.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 103.

Because the professional trend in the military favored continued relations with the Soviet Union as a source of military science, technology, equipment, training, and possible nuclear exchange, the CCP elite was able to associate the professionalization of the military with the external antagonist.<sup>67</sup> Thus the professional viewpoint came under increasing attack through published editorials that characterized the lure of Soviet influence as an abandonment of the CCP's rich revolutionary heritage.<sup>68</sup>

Following the removal of Peng Dehuai, Lin Biao gradually and systematically implemented reforms that re-politicized the PLA and derailed the professionalization of the PLA officer corps. With modernization constrained by the international isolationism following the Sino-Soviet split, professionalization of the PLA was curtailed by policies instituted under Lin Biao that reorganized the PLA. By enlarging the militia, expanding the interlocking directorate, increasing the relative power of the political commissars, and revamping PLA training and education, politicization of the PLA became the priority over professionalization.

### **1. Expanding the Militia**

As the PLA underwent professionalization, the role of the militia came under scrutiny. The professional training of the PLA increased the discrepancy between regulars in the army and a militia that distracted from the PLA's effort to transform to a modern military and had little use in modern warfare.<sup>69</sup> However, the maintenance of the militia symbolized the Party elite's "commitment to the principle that ultimately the defense of China rested on the people—not the technology and expertise of the military establishment."<sup>70</sup>

As the international context influenced Chinese military strategy at the end of the 1950s into a self-reliant strategy of "people's war," the militia became a much more critical element to defense than the modernization of conventional forces. In order to effectively integrate the militia within the PLA necessitated the resurgence of the political

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<sup>67</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 109.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 109–110.

<sup>69</sup> Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces*, 17.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

commissar in the PLA as the link between the military and society.<sup>71</sup> Because commissars serve as the liaison between the local militias, the party and the army, they would necessarily become increasingly relevant in the strategic shift to "people's war." Lin Biao's disdain of the professional faction within the military that resisted non-military tasks such as the training of the militia or the participation in economic development prompted him to restructure the PLA and refocus political indoctrination to further strengthen the GPD and the role of the political commissar.<sup>72</sup>

## **2. Interlocking Directorate**

While the interlocking directorate remained largely intact at the elite level, there was a purge among the professionalization faction among the elite and the Party Committee system was expanded to lower echelons in order to coordinate and direct political, military, and government activity. At the elite level Lin Biao's ascendance to Defense Minister following the purge of Peng Dehuai was accompanied by the promotion of two former political commissars, Luo Ruiqing and Qiu Huizuo, to departments within the PLA.<sup>73</sup> Shortly after becoming the Minister of National Defense, Lin then outlined his policy in September 1959, which would reconstruct party organization in the PLA, strengthen political education, and restore the lost connection between the army and the masses.<sup>74</sup>

While political commissars were established within the PLA chain of command and designated as equal to the military commander, the "Party Committees were established 'outside' but parallel to the organizational structure of the Army."<sup>75</sup> The purpose of this parallel organization was to strengthen military organization and ensure that the military operated in accordance with the CCP. Additionally, the Party

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<sup>71</sup> William W. Whitson, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927-71* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 454; and Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces*, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 55.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander L. George, *The Chinese Communist Army in Action: The Korean War and its Aftermath* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 45.



Committee promoted solidarity, arbitrated disputes, and built consensus when needed.<sup>76</sup> However, the Party Committee System though parallel was not independent of the PLA organization. The political commissar has typically served as a member of the committee and at lower echelons often occupied the role as the secretary general of the Party Committee.<sup>77</sup>

However, during the emphasis on professionalization, the Party Committee system had gradually fallen into disuse. Not only had approximately 7,000 companies lacked party branch committees, the number of party members within the PLA had also declined.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the political control system was not only neglected, but the decrease in Party members within the Army reduced the influence of the Party Committee system to influence the PLA. Therefore, the expansion of the interlocking directorate to the lower levels of party and military bureaucracy allowed for the political leaders to influence the military and promote party policy.<sup>79</sup>

The web of command that weaves together the PLA chain of command among military commanders and political commissars also incorporates the parallel, but not separate Party Committee system hierarchy to produce an interlocking system at lower echelons.<sup>80</sup> At the provincial and district level, an increasing number of Party Committees formed an interlocking directorate that connected the party, army, and government. While only the frontier regions possessed an interlocking directorate when Lin Biao became Defense Minister, all military regions were operating under an interlocking directorate at either the province or district level in 1973.<sup>81</sup>

Monte Bullard emphasized the expansion of the interlocking directorate between the party, army, and government to show the key institutional linkages in party-army

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<sup>76</sup> George, *The Chinese Communist Army*, 49.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>78</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 63.

<sup>79</sup> Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution*, 141.

<sup>80</sup> David Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army," *The China Quarterly* 127 (1991): 550.

<sup>81</sup> Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution*, 104.

relations.<sup>82</sup> From 1960 to 1973, the number of interlocking roles held by elites expanded from 122 in 1960 to 445 in 1973.<sup>83</sup> As the interlocking directorate was expanded into each level, the top party representative would assume the top military position as the political commissar.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the CCP tightened political control through increasing political indoctrination and centralizing institutional control over the military through the concentration of the interlocking directorate at lower levels.<sup>85</sup>

### **3. Role of the GPD**

In the 1950s, when Party and military elites were aligned in advocating professionalization, the GPD molded the PLA's military training and education to reflect this emphasis. However, in the gradual shift towards politicization in the late 1950s, once again the GPD reflected the Party's demands and then began the politicization of the PLA. In order to restore political control of the PLA, the political commissar would need to be strengthened relative to the military commander to promote and enforce Party policy. While the role of the Party Committee remained important, the strength of the political commissar was crucial to bridge the PLA and Party direction disseminated through the parallel command chains.<sup>86</sup>

Though efforts to strengthen the role of political commissars were undertaken prior to Peng Dehuai's removal in 1959, PLA officers whose lingering interest in professionalization resisted adopting the political controls.<sup>87</sup> However, replacing Peng Dehuai as an advocate for professionalization at the top of the PLA hierarchy while enhancing the political commissar's role through the deepened interlocking directorate encompassed by the party committee system, disrupted the PLA's ability to continue professionalization.

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<sup>82</sup> Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution*, 149.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>85</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 115.

<sup>86</sup> Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces*, 26.

<sup>87</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 57–62.

Additionally, the entrusting of personnel information and influence on the promotion process within the PLA provided the political commissar leverage to promote the Party line.<sup>88</sup>

Growing the number of sub-departments under the GPD also expanded the general influence of the GPD throughout the PLA. Following the reorganization in 1957–1958 the number of sub-departments under the GPD control increased to include the cadre, propaganda, security work, liaison, mass work, and the system of general secretaries.<sup>89</sup> Of specific importance regarding influence now under the GPD's purview was the function of the general secretaries, cadre, and security departments. General secretaries controlled the most sensitive of Party correspondence, while the cadre and security department allowed the surveillance of Party members by developing and maintaining dossiers of Party members within the PLA.<sup>90</sup>

Additionally, Lin Biao curtailed the power of the military commander through emphasizing development and training of the militia under the PLA's tutelage. The political commissar, as liaison between society and military, thus continued to gain in importance relative to the military commander.<sup>91</sup> As Godwin states, "the political commissar would increase in significance because, in a strategy for protracted war, he is responsible for indoctrinating the soldiers, establishing a close working relationship with the regional forces and the militia and maintaining the continued support of the population over a long and brutal war."<sup>92</sup> Thus, Lin Biao's restoration of the political committees and political commissar system established an active presence of the political control system and facilitated the integration of the PLA with society.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution*, 153.

<sup>89</sup> Larry Wortzel, "The General Political Department and the Evolution of the Political Commissar System," in *The People's Liberation Army as Organization: Reference Volume v1.0*, ed. James C. Mulvenon, and Andrew N.D. Yang, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002), 231.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>91</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 54.

<sup>92</sup> Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 25.

#### 4. PLA Training and Education

In the early 1950s the party elite promoted modernization and professionalization of the officer corps. To accomplish this shift, leadership within the GPD actively promoted education that emphasized technical and professional training at the expense of political indoctrination. However, in the subsequent shift away from professionalization, it was once again the GPD that directed change within the PLA.

Along with a greater role for the political commissar, the training for PLA troops began to incorporate greater amounts of political indoctrination. By mandating study of political courses which corresponded to the individual officer's rank and a yearly examination to determine progress, political indoctrination was re-introduced to the existing officer corps, and institutionalized for future officer development.<sup>94</sup> Thus the trend during the professionalization of the early 1950s that involved shifting greater portions of training to professional and technical tasks, was replaced with a political focus.

A clear example of the shift towards politicization was found in the PLA academies. Because military academies were the stronghold of the notion of professionalization, they were targeted most directly to shift the PLA's focus away from its desire to professionalize. The CCP controlled the political education of the entire PLA "to ensure the complete subservience and loyalty of their military arm to the dictates of the party high command."<sup>95</sup> Throughout the academies, military textbooks incorporated larger collections of Mao's writings and focused more attention on political development.<sup>96</sup> Changing the curriculum in the academies would at once cease enlarging the pool of officers indoctrinated with the professionalization ethos and alter the views of subsequent military leaders.

Political commissars were also placed in training departments and courses alongside the military commanders.<sup>97</sup> Then, following political training, both military

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<sup>94</sup> Joffe, *Party and Army*, 116.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 126.

commanders and commissars would work side by side in the strengthened party committee system which would then allow for the political commissar to continue political indoctrination of soldiers.<sup>98</sup> As the power of the political commissars surpassed that of the military commander, penetration of the ranks within the PLA became more and more prevalent.

By 1961, the precursor to the Little Red Book of Mao's writing had been published for political study within the PLA.<sup>99</sup> Then in May 1961, the Central Military Commission published the "General Principles of the Combat Rules and Regulations of the Combined Force," which confirmed that man is the decisive factor in war against technologically modern weapons and equipment.<sup>100</sup> Thus, the CCP solidified the politicized nature of the PLA, and completed the reversal of the professionalization trend of the PLA.

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<sup>98</sup> Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, 447.

<sup>99</sup> Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, 56.

<sup>100</sup> Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces*, 23.

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### III. CASE STUDY II: 1989

#### A. OVERVIEW

Unlike the gradual shift from professionalization in the late 1950s, the shift from professionalization to re-politicization of the PLA that revolved around the infamous events at Tiananmen Square in 1989 came about quickly and lasted only briefly. Immediately following Deng Xiaoping's return and consolidation of power in 1977, the program for reform was promulgated. With economic modernization taking top priority, modernization of the military was the last of the modernizations behind that of agriculture, industry, and science and technology.<sup>101</sup> However, military reforms aimed at professionalizing the PLA were promptly adopted in order to facilitate the eventual military modernization.

The professionalization trend that was carried out through the 1980s largely displaced the political concerns that had been consistently fostered within the PLA throughout Mao's later years. Similar to the politicization that occurred at the end of the 1950s, the re-politicization of the PLA in 1989 largely resulted from a factional divide among both the party and military elite that was exacerbated by domestic and international factors that threatened the survivability of the communist regime.

Here again, the importance is to examine the mechanisms through which the Party used to re-orient the PLA from its focus on professionalization. In 1989, similar measures to those used in the late 1950s were adopted through the same mechanisms that transmitted Party direction throughout the PLA. Reshuffling of the party elite was accompanied by reinforcing a lower level interlocking directorate through deepening the party committee system and strengthening the role of the GPD. Thus the changing emphasis of the CCP away from professionalism was able to penetrate and re-orient the military's focus away from a decade long commitment of military professionalization.

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<sup>101</sup> Ellis Joffe, "The Army After Mao," *International Journal* 34 no 4 (Autumn, 1979): 579.

## B. PROFESSIONALIZATION

With modernization as the motivation for Deng Xiaoping's reform agenda encompassing all aspects of the PRC, the low emphasis afforded to the military resulted from a lack of ability to modernize rather than accurately reflecting a desire to transition the PLA. Economic, agricultural and science and technological modernization needed to precede military modernization to build a sufficiently strong economic base to commence military modernization. However, professionalization of the military began immediately, albeit slowly, following the changing emphasis as advocated by the CCP elite and the PLA's poor performance in Vietnam in 1979.<sup>102</sup> Similar to the inadequacy of the CPV during the Korean War, the PLA's involvement in a skirmish with Vietnam highlighted significant problems in the way that the military was managed.<sup>103</sup> After identifying PLA weakness in combat readiness, overstaffing of the military leadership, and lack of suitable training, Deng initiated his effort to reform the military into a more professional and effective organization prior to committing to military modernization.<sup>104</sup>

Early efforts to begin the process of reforming the PLA in the Deng era involved establishing a military court system in 1979 and drafting new military regulations and conscription laws throughout the 1980s.<sup>105</sup> However, the more significant reforms initiated by the CCP in the Deng era that clearly indicated the shift in emphasis towards professionalization of the PLA were the re-introduction of ranks, a new service law outlining promotion criteria, and the institutionalization of forced retirements.

Since the expanded meeting of the Central Military Commission in 1985, PLA modernization and professionalization became the primary focus of the CCP elite.<sup>106</sup> Reinstating military ranks and codifying the division between officer and enlisted troops was itself a major shift towards professionalization and allowed for additional

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<sup>102</sup> Joffe, "The Army After Mao," 580.

<sup>103</sup> Shipeng Zheng, *Party vs. State in Post-1949 China: The Institutional Dilemma* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 225.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas A. Bickford, "Regularization and the Chinese People's Liberation Army: An Assessment of Change," *Asian Survey* 40 no 3 (May–June, 2000): 464–465.

<sup>106</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 26.



reforms to further professionalize the military. Similar to the introduction of ranks in 1955, the military hierarchy promoted efficient organization capable of better managing the military which once again shifted the inter-military relationship from its egalitarian origin.

Additionally, in 1985, the regulations governing retirement entitled "Regulations for Military Service of Active Duty Officers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army" were developed in synch with the re-instatement of military ranks. In this regulation, age limits depending on military rank established a mandatory retirement age throughout the PLA while defining an absolute maximum of 30 years of service.<sup>107</sup> By limiting the length of service of military officers along with an overall troop reduction of one million soldiers, military officers that were promoted through the ranks as a result of the earlier politicization efforts by the CCP were gradually phased out.<sup>108</sup>

It is important to remember, however, that the establishment of these new policies did not produce immediate effects. Though Deng was considered a paramount leader of the PRC, these regulations still met with resistance and were only slowly implemented throughout the PLA.<sup>109</sup> Equally important to notice is that the consistency of the effort by the Party elite to alter the orientation of the PLA into a more professional military gradually succeeded. For example, the retirement norm, while only slowly becoming adopted, still had the effect of lowering the average age of officers by 1986.<sup>110</sup>

Changes in military education and training also aided the PLA's return to a professional orientation at the urging of Deng's 1977 Speech "The Army Should Attach Strategic Importance to Education and Training."<sup>111</sup> The subsequent education reforms

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<sup>107</sup> James C. Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Chinese Officer Corps: Trends and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1997), 39.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>109</sup> For specific examples of PLA resistance to change towards the establishment of legal norms and procedures, see Bickford, "Regularization and the Chinese People's Liberation Army," 469–474.

<sup>110</sup> Zheng, *Party vs. State*, 227.

<sup>111</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Officer Corps*, 12.

linked education level of the troops in the PLA with future promotions. To overcome any opposition within the PLA, Deng utilized the GPD to ensure that education would weight as heavily as performance when considering promotions and assignments.<sup>112</sup>

Professional military education had also improved throughout the 1980s by first recruiting better qualified members, and then concentrating education on technical and military issues rather than politically motivated subjects.<sup>113</sup> By 1984, officer recruits for the PLA were sought from recent graduates of colleges or technical academies. Additionally in 1984, the military academies of the PLA would be combined to form the NDU in an effort to provide a more comprehensive education and training program for senior officers.<sup>114</sup> The professional orientation of PLA training was then further reinforced by the contact with foreign militaries as more and more countries normalized relations and the PRC gradually improved its international relations.<sup>115</sup> Cumulatively, the professionalization of the PLA training and education system resulted in 58% of military elites with tertiary education by 1988, which is a dramatic improvement of the dismal 4% of military elites with an equivalent education in 1982.<sup>116</sup>

### **C. EMERGENCE OF FACTIONS**

Among the Party elite, a general consensus was built around the effort to modernize the PRC's economy, agriculture, science and technology, and defense sectors. However, the democracy protests in December 1986 represented a threat to regime stability and instigated the CCP to initiate a campaign against "bourgeois liberalization."<sup>117</sup> In response to the movement for increased democracy, members in the Party elite were gradually forced to determine their own views on whether to continue

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<sup>112</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Officer Corps*, 13.

<sup>113</sup> Bickford, "Regularization and the Chinese People's Liberation Army," 468.

<sup>114</sup> Zheng, *Party vs. State*, 229.

<sup>115</sup> Bickford, "Regularization and the Chinese People's Liberation Army," 469.

<sup>116</sup> Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends." *Asian Survey* 33 no 8 (August 1993): 760.

<sup>117</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 27.

supporting the modernization efforts that had inadvertently led to the popular demands for change within the government or to revert to a more communist orientation in order to preserve regime stability.

Evidence of factional struggle within the Party became apparent in the details of the 1988 attempt to control inflation in the PRC. Deng, with the support of liberal reformers Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang, and Wan Li, proposed a price and wage plan to adjust the two tiered pricing system in order to control inflation. However, through a bargaining process to reach consensual support, the Politburo ultimately signed on to a conservative economic program and rejected Deng Xiaoping's more liberal proposal. In essence, the final result of the effort to combat inflation eluded to a disagreement within the Party elite on whether to continue an agenda of reforms to achieve modernization.<sup>118</sup>

This dilemma equally permeated the ranks of the PLA, thus forming a cleavage that similarly divided both the PLA and Party leadership. On the one hand, PLA officers that began to favor professionalization at the exclusion of politicization aligned with the liberal political elite that desired to continue the reforms that had begun professionalizing and modernizing the PLA. Thus, professionalization of the military corresponded with Party elite that advocated a continuation of the reform era.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, hard-liners within the Party elite that were inclined to abandon or suspend reform efforts in order to secure the political regime corresponded with those within the PLA that either valued the Party above all else or envisioned a strong political regime as a requirement for the overall health of the military. Therefore, the party officials that resisted the reform agenda also favored a shift away from professionalization within the PLA and were more closely aligned with military members that favored re-politicization to strengthen the political orientation of the PLA.

#### **D. PROFESSIONALIZATION AFFECTING POLITICIZATION**

Increased professionalism within the PLA, through the restoration of military ranks, instituting mandatory retirement thresholds and focus on professional military

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<sup>118</sup> Victor Shih, *Factions and Finance in China: Elite Conflict and Inflation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 131–136.

<sup>119</sup> Cheng and White, "The Army in the Succession," 782.

education also provided less interference from ideological persuasion.<sup>120</sup> James Mulvenon highlights the fact that any career path in the PLA that involved political work quickly fell out of the competition to promote while military only career tracks gained an advantage.<sup>121</sup> Thus, as in the case of increased professionalization in the early 1950s, the relative balance between the military commander and political commissar slowly shifted in favor of the former.

However, it is important to remember that professionalization did not occur in absence of political indoctrination. As courses in the military academies turned its educational focus towards professionalization, politicization was not completely abandoned. The Director of the GPD continued to call attention to the usefulness of political education in conjunction with military affairs and technical training.<sup>122</sup> The decrease in political careers may reflect the blending of political influence into professional military jobs, but not that political influence has been completely displaced as professionalization progressed throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The point is that the evolving curriculum and general professionalization of the PLA shifted the balance in favor of professionalization, but did not completely abandon political indoctrination.

The emphasis of "people's war" guided China's development from the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s until 1985 when Deng Xiaoping reformulated China's strategic environment. Reflecting on the fact that China was unlikely to be subject by an attack from either the U.S. or Soviet Union, the Party directed the PLA to focus on fighting local, limited wars along its periphery with a smaller, quicker, modernized, and more professional force.<sup>123</sup> As the PRC's defense strategy evolved away from "people's war" to focus on local limited wars in the border regions, or in close proximity in the case of Taiwan, the military became increasingly isolated from political involvement. No longer was the PRC as reliant on large standing armies and direct support from local civilians as in the "people's war" concept that sought to lure the enemy deep within China to utilize

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<sup>120</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Officer Corps*, 77.

<sup>121</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Officer Corps*, 77.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>123</sup> Melvin Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China's Security: The New Roles of the Military* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 1998), 100–109.

superiority of a guerrilla force on its own soil. Thus the increased independence from the militia decreased the roles and responsibilities of the political commissar and further strengthened the relative power of the military commander.

The balance with politicization of the armed forces was upset as professionalism became increasingly emphasized, and the PLA became increasingly distant from the CCP.<sup>124</sup> The focus on external enemies and a commitment to the modernization and professionalization of the military inculcated the notion within some Party elites that the PLA should disengage even further from the political arena.<sup>125</sup>

## **E. EXTERNAL FACTORS**

Following President Richard Nixon's visit in 1972, the world began warming to the PRC. In the 1980s, the push towards modernization of Chinese society, under the steership of the CCP, continued to make significant inroads in international cooperation. At the time of the Tiananmen Square uprising, two significant international events were scheduled in China that would help facilitate a more involved role for China in the international community. The Asian Development Bank was looking to begin its first meeting on Chinese territory and, more importantly, the first Sino-Soviet summit in 30 years was scheduled to occur.<sup>126</sup>

However, the gradual changes within the Soviet Union towards reform in its own political system presented a critical dilemma for the CCP. The focus on modernization of various sectors within China had paved the way for friendlier relations with its once adversarial neighbor, but employing the military to settle domestic unrest at Tiananmen would undermine international opinion on the CCP's legitimacy, strength, and commitment to modernization.

The CCP response to the PLA's vacillation to the Tiananmen uprising was particularly forceful because of the volatile international context in which it occurred. Indications that communist regimes in Eastern Europe may be evicted from power by the

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<sup>124</sup> "On Questions of Party History: Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," *Beijing Review* 27 (July 1981): 28.

<sup>125</sup> Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State in China," 552.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew Scobell, "Why the People's Army Fired on the People: The Chinese Military and Tiananmen," *Armed Forces and Society* 18 no 2 (Winter 1992): 195–196.

military in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania caused the CCP to fear for its political survival. With the constant reminders of the rising military opposition to Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the CCP was provided the motivation to reprioritize professionalization of the PLA behind that of politicization to ensure the PLA remained loyal to the Party.<sup>127</sup>

## **F. REVERSAL OF PROFESSIONALIZATION**

While the emergence of factions within the CCP was evident when scrutinizing Party politics in 1988, the events of Tiananmen Square in 1989 brought the division within the Party elite into the forefront. Zhao Ziyang, Yan Jiaqi and Su Shaozhi formed a small yet powerful faction of the Party elite that advocated political reforms in addition to the pursuit of liberal modernization policies. While the overall consensus among the Party elite was to resist any pressure to compromise and adopt a hard-line response opposed to the civil unrest, Zhao Ziyang reached out to the protestors to find a solution.<sup>128</sup> Unlike the nuanced evidence of a faction in 1988 on how to confront inflation, the factional divide was now clearly visible to both a wide domestic and international audience. What made the political faction particularly divisive is that within the PLA, it was logical to assume that some military professionals would be sympathetic to politicians that sought to continue an emphasis on reform that had already begun professionalizing and modernizing the military. Additionally, the liberal reforms had been welcomed by the West and exposed an opportunity for foreign influence of the factional split within the Party.

The hesitation with which the PLA responded to the political direction from the political elite indicated a critical challenge to the Party's political authority. Evidence that there were at least some individuals that preferred a professional and depoliticized military is found in the prosecution of military personnel in conjunction with the incident. Approximately 1,000 military members participated in the protest on 16 May while another 100 naval cadets participated in full uniform on 23 May.<sup>129</sup> It was finally

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<sup>127</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 132.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>129</sup> Scobell, "Why the People's Army Fired," 195–196.

reported that 110 officers and 1,400 troops had failed to obey orders from the CCP in the Tiananmen Square incident.<sup>130</sup> In particular, Xu Qinxian, commander of the 38th Army, was court-martialed for his delayed response to the Party's order to impose martial law.<sup>131</sup>

While the PLA, in general, remained loyal to the party line, the hesitation in following the Party's direction lessened the degree to which the Party could trust the PLA's loyalty and exposed a factional cleavage that cut across both the Party and military elite. Therefore, a response by the hard-liners in the Party elite would necessarily be a significant and immediate shift in civil-military relations with a significant impact on the professionalization of the PLA. Similar to the mechanisms employed in affecting a shift from professionalization in the late 1950s, the Party sought to re-orient the PLA through expanding the interlocking directorate, increasing the relative power of the political commissars, and revamping PLA training and education.

### **1. Interlocking Directorate**

The interlocking directorate had characterized the earlier days of the CCP in which there was a fusion between the civilian and military elite through their shared experiences of revolutionary struggle. However, this powerful cohesive bond had been largely disabled by the retirement of veteran political and military leaders that were subject to the reforms that established upper age limits depending on rank, or simply a matter of the individual's age.<sup>132</sup>

While the interlocking directorate may be largely disabled because of the relative disappearance of the revolutionary elite with both political and military roots, the interlocking directorate remained applicable in several other key areas. At the elite level, Deng Xiaoping remained atop both the political and military organizations and his revolutionary experience was divided among military experience as a political commissar

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<sup>130</sup> Zheng, *Party vs. State*, 233.

<sup>131</sup> Tai Ming Cheung, "The PLA and its Role Between April–June 1989," in *China's Military: The PLA in 1990/1991*, ed. Richard H. Yang (Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Republic of China: National Sun Yat-sen University, 1991), 14.

<sup>132</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 13.

and as a member of the Party elite. Evidence that the interlocking directorate persisted after 1980 is also seen in the positions held by Wang Ruilin, a longtime friend and associate of Deng Xiaoping. In 1983 Wang Ruilin was deputy director of the CCP general office and since 1990 has served as head of the PLA's Discipline Inspection Commission (DIC).<sup>133</sup> Additionally, Wang Zhen, the PRC's vice president at the time of the Tiananmen Square incident originated from a military background.<sup>134</sup> And, Yang Shangkun, who sat as the national President and secretary general of the CMC also occupied the leadership role of the entire PLA.

Functioning in place of the weakened interlocking directorate at the elite level were several policies and institutional linkages that prevented a dislocation of the PLA from the Party. PLA elite and all officers at the rank of Colonel and above were still required to be members of the CCP.<sup>135</sup> The Party Committee system continued to ensure that political aims be incorporated within the military in the lower echelons as the interlocking directorate permeated the PLA command structure. Where individuals of the revolutionary elite constituted a leader in the PRC that was also politically reliable, the Party Committee system could ensure that the PLA command structure reflected appropriate political goals. Whether or not this mechanism could perform its function then depended on the relative strength of the members. As Party goals alternated between an emphasis on professionalism and politicization, the relative importance of the various players would fluctuate accordingly. Therefore, during the professionalization trend, military commanders would have considerable influence in the Party Committees.

Another way in which the interlocking directorate could breakdown, but still ensure politically resolute leaders is to purge the civilian and military leaders that had demonstrated a lack of political trustworthiness. Indeed, there were a significant number of top civilian and military leaders purged in the wake of the Tiananmen incident. Among the civilians that were affected, members of the party elite that had advocated that the PLA be depoliticized, such as Zhao Ziyang, Yan Jiaqi and Su Shaozhi, were

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<sup>133</sup> Cheng and White, "The Army in the Succession," 777.

<sup>134</sup> June Teufel Dreyer, "Tiananmen and the PLA," 38.

<sup>135</sup> Shambaugh, David. "Civil-Military Relations in China: Party-Army or National Military?" *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 16 (2002): 12.



purged.<sup>136</sup> Additionally, the head of the Central Leading Group on Propaganda and Ideological Work, the bureaucratic pinnacle of the Party's massive propaganda system, Hu Qiuli was relieved in the wake of the crisis unfolding in Tiananmen Square in 1989.<sup>137</sup>

Within the PLA, Yang Shangkun's trust-worthy half-brother, Yang Baibing, who was recently appointed head of the GPD during initial signs of unrest in 1987 oversaw a reconfiguration of the military leadership.<sup>138</sup> This close relationship between the civil and military leadership strongly resembled the multiple roles performed by the revolutionary elite that had performed political and military roles in the interlocking directorate. Throughout the leadership ranks, there were a significant number of promotions of politically trustworthy individuals with experience in the GPD and among those involved in the implementation of martial law in response to the unrest at Tiananmen Square.<sup>139</sup>

Then, to bolster the stature and power associated with the politically appointed officers, there were consistent rotations within the PLA to undermine any regional or personal support for military commanders. In the military regions and military districts, there was a large reshuffling of military commanders and commissars to delink military officers from local power bases. Of the seven military districts, six commanders and commissars were reshuffled.<sup>140</sup> Additionally, PLA commissars and military officers that favorably viewed the Party's use of the PLA at Tiananmen were then more likely promoted in the subsequent shakeup of the PLA. Thus, a new politically reliable leadership in the PLA was quickly set in place following June 1989.

Any agreement with the general observation that the interlocking directorate at the elite level had begun losing explanatory power is only marginally important in analyzing the shift in civil-military relations. While the older revolutionary elite could be

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<sup>136</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 27.

<sup>137</sup> David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal* 57 (2007): 32.

<sup>138</sup> Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State," 543.

<sup>139</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 29.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

reasonably seen as politically reliable, the replacement of top level officials within the Party and the PLA with politically reliable individuals substituted in for the role previously fulfilled through the interlocking directorate. Additionally, the Party Committee system institutionalized political involvement at lower command echelons of the PLA. To understand whether political goals were affectively transmitted to the PLA, it is necessary to examine the role of the GPD, especially the political commissars and PLA education and training.

## **2. Role of the GPD**

Rather than a gradual change that shifted the viewpoint of the military officer to favor professionalization over the party line, the hesitation with which the PLA responded to the party leadership's command to suppress the civil unrest in Tiananmen Square instantly showed the CCP elite the degree in which professionalization had distanced the PLA from the Party. To counter the limited degree of military autonomy, the CCP politicization once again relied on a strengthened GPD and an expansion of the party committee system to ensure political considerations disseminated through education, training, and propaganda were thoroughly accepted.

The CCP prioritized the expansion of the parallel, but separate, Party Committee system to lower command echelons and strengthened the Committee's ability to monitor and report on the PLA's adherence to Party policy.<sup>141</sup> As an organizational element responsible for political indoctrination of the PLA, the strengthened Party Committee was able to implement the indoctrination program directed by the head of the GPD, Yang Baibing.<sup>142</sup> With membership that spanned local party leaders, the political commissar and military commander, the Party Committee system was thus the critical mechanism for political control where Party direction converged from both civilian and military channels.

To strengthen the GPD it would be necessary to bolster its capabilities and stature throughout the PLA. The introduction of the Discipline Inspection Committee under the

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<sup>141</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 132.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

GPD combined with the GPD's influence on officer promotions provided the political commissar with the resources to ensure and enforce political reliability of the PLA.<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, the political commissar and party committee system, as the traditional tools of Party indoctrination, education, and surveillance were strengthened and enlarged to ensure continued loyalty of the PLA as an ideologically stable ally of the communist regime.<sup>144</sup> Additionally, the GPD was relatively strengthened by dissolving other sources of power within the PLA. As discussed in the interlocking directorate section, the appointment of GPD personnel to various leadership roles in other departments within the PLA along with the shuffling of military commanders among the military regions and districts undercut any personal or regional power bases of all military commanders.

In the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, the PLA was required to police its own ranks, and investigate instances of insubordination. Thus the Discipline Inspection Commission and the system of military courts, both under the organization of the GPD were tasked to respond to the leadership's demands to root out the sources of insubordination.<sup>145</sup> According to Yang Baibing, the DIC and GPD had identified 111 officers and 1,400 troops that were implicated in these investigations for breaching military discipline.<sup>146</sup> Because the GPD was assigned the role of internal investigator of military commanders, the conflict between political and professional interests within the PLA was resuscitated. The GPD and by extension the political commissar, through the investigation by the DIC, gained in relative power to the professional military commander.

The role of the political commissar was continually emphasized along with the deepening of the party committee system to quickly and completely re-politicize the PLA.<sup>147</sup> At the All-Army Political Work Conference, six months after Tiananmen, Yang Baibing stressed that the role of the PLA was to confront any sign of "peaceful evolution"

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<sup>143</sup> Larry Wortzel, "The General Political Department and the Evolution of the Political Commissar System," in *The People's Liberation Army as Organization: Reference Volume v1.0*, ed. James C. Mulvenon, and Andrew N.D. Yang, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002), 244.

<sup>144</sup> Wortzel, "The General Political Department," 234.

<sup>145</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 23.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>147</sup> Cheung, "The PLA," 14.

that would pull the PRC away from its socialist direction.<sup>148</sup> This heavy political bent would infiltrate the ranks through an intensive propaganda campaign facilitated by the strengthened control mechanisms of the Party Committee system, Discipline Inspection Committee, and the political commissar. Thus the CCP was able to quickly and dramatically halt the trend towards increased professionalization in the PLA.<sup>149</sup>

On more than one occasion, the CCP has adapted the role of the GPD and Party Committee system to match the direction of the political leadership. In the late 1950s and in the aftermath of the Tiananmen crisis, when politicization of the PLA was desired, the political commissar was strengthened and the party committee system rejuvenated. And since Tiananmen, the Party elites have persistently reinforcement the political commissar and party committee system to ensure the PLA remain politically reliable.<sup>150</sup>

### **3. PLA Training and Education**

Organizationally, training and education in the PLA remains the responsibility of the GPD. Following Tiananmen, the nature of military education shifted from its professional focus on technical training to an emphasis on political education among the ranks of the PLA. Half of every work week would be spent in political study to ensure adequate time is afforded for the studying the onslaught of political indoctrination.<sup>151</sup> Reflecting the shift away from professionalization, the major theme of the subsequent education and indoctrination campaigns was now focused on the 'absolute leadership' of the Party over the army.<sup>152</sup> Lei Feng, the model soldier that embodied the desirable degree of political indoctrination within a soldier was brought back out as an example for all of the PLA to emulate. While this image of Lei Feng is not a new one, his re-appearance illustrates the politicization effort of the PLA.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 28.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>150</sup> Wortzel, "The General Political Department," 234.

<sup>151</sup> Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State," 544.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 554.

<sup>153</sup> Richard J. Latham, "China's Party-Army Relations After June 1989: A Case for Miles' Law?" 113.

Propaganda directed at the PLA focused on restoring discipline, ensuring CCP control over the PLA, resisting "peaceful evolution" and "bourgeois liberalization," and improving political work in lower echelons.<sup>154</sup> Training and education programs re-emphasized political education and the value of political work. Beginning with higher command elements, and then filtering down to lower command echelons, political study sessions were required from two to three times a week for the military members or approximately half a work week.<sup>155</sup>

Contrary to the advocates of professionalization that had encouraged the PLA to disengage from politics, articles in the *Liberation Army Daily* took aim at this line of thought and associated the desire for an apolitical military to a plot to overthrow the Communist regime.<sup>156</sup> In response to the collapse of Communist regimes in Europe, the CCP stressed that the PLA should instead draw closer to the Party and function as the vanguard against any peaceful evolution that would undermine the Party's authority. An editorial following the Tiananmen incident on National Day repeatedly stressed the "party's absolute leadership over the army" because of the need of the military to support the CCP against any elements that wish to undermine the Party's authority.<sup>157</sup> Tellingly, within the same editorial, no consideration was given to military modernization or to the professionalization of the PLA. Thus, the shift from the long running effort to professionalize and modernize the PLA since the late 1970's had encountered a complete, and unbalanced, reversal to the professionalization trend.<sup>158</sup>

Among the overall effort towards professionalization of the PLA from the late 1970s, "the re-politicization campaigns following Tiananmen were an anomaly in this trend, but they were largely completed by January 1990. After that date, and especially in response to the U.S. military display in the 1991 Gulf War, professional themes once again balanced political themes in the military media and political study, and the normal

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<sup>154</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 25.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>156</sup> Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State," 555.

<sup>157</sup> Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 25.

<sup>158</sup> See Cheung, "The PLA," 15

training cycle was resumed."<sup>159</sup> However, as the military continues to become a more professional force, lessons derived from the significant injection of political control in this period show that "ideological pressures, political involvement, leadership conflicts, and intra-army frictions" have substantially impeded progress in professionalizing the military.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Officer Corps*, 23.

<sup>160</sup> Joffe, "The Army after Mao," 568–584.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

### **A. SUMMARY**

There were many similarities between the two case studies, each of which focused on political interruptions of the well established efforts to professionalize the military. Separated by approximately three decades from each other, these case studies are connected by the general trend that shows a commitment to professionalization, the emergence of factions in a dynamic international and domestic environment, and a subsequent injection of political control over the PLA that disrupted the general trend towards professionalization.

In the early 1950s and the 1980s, Party leadership was committed to professionalization. However, as professionalism became readily adopted by the officer corps, changes in international and domestic environment facilitated the formation of cleavages within the political elite. The confluence of additional factors derived from both the internal and external environment disproportionately and unevenly affected the attitudes of the Party elites. In 1959, the domestic economic failure of the GLF combined with increased Sino-Soviet tensions to fragment the political elite. Similarly, the domestic political turmoil in 1989, set amongst the political changes in the Soviet Union and challenges to the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, divided the political elite. Because the pursuit of professionalization and modernization of the military served the military's purpose, changes among the political elite were divisive among the military.

In both case studies, the Party resorted to the institutional mechanisms to ensure political control and ultimately, loyalty to the Party. Through the parallel, but separate political control mechanisms of the party committee system, and the political commissar system, the CCP was able to penetrate the military command structure down to the company level. While these mechanisms remained institutionalized in the increasingly

professional military, their institutional integrity and relative power to influence the military commander decreased as professionalization was emphasized throughout the PLA.<sup>161</sup>

By strengthening and expanding the party committee system and political commissar system, the Party was effective in re-politicizing the military and lessening the priority of professionalization. Re-establishing the party committee system at each command echelon and ensuring a political commissar was attached as co-commander restored institutional integrity. Expanding the role of the GPD through consolidation in 1959 and founding the Discipline Inspection Commission prior to the 1989 events provided punitive and manipulative powers for the commissars and Party representatives to politicize the military. While strengthening the Party's control, purges among the elite, forced retirements, occupational rotations to disrupt informal sources of power were used to weaken any resistance to the shifting emphasis.

The GPD and political commissars have consistently been important in shaping the PLA. The training and education programs along with promotion criteria have been instrumental in both professionalizing and politicizing the military. As the Party shifted its emphasis in both case studies, a bolstering of the Party's control mechanisms was needed to overcome any resistance within the military. Thus the ability to shift the emphasis away from professionalization required a shift in relative power away from that of the professional officer.

## **B. PROFESSIONALIZATION**

Since 1991–1992, there has been a consistent commitment to both military modernization and professionalization. Contemporary analysis has begun to connect the growing body of laws and regulations governing the PLA as constituting the grounds on which civil-military relations in the PRC has undergone a fundamental shift to include

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<sup>161</sup> Latham, "China's Party-Army Relations After June 1989," 110.



army-state relations.<sup>162</sup> However, it remains critical to avoid confusing professionalization of the PLA with a transition towards objective civilian control or to anticipate the emergence of a de-politicized PLA.

Using the terminology of Samuel Huntington, the “client” of the PLA will remain the Party, and the military will not be able to shift to objective civilian control as long as the PRC's political system is dominated by one Party. Additionally, the institutional mechanisms that encourage professional development are also the mechanism by which the Party is able to provide the political direction of the PLA. In both case studies, it was shown that the GPD may be used to either enhance or reverse any effort to professionalize the PLA. Thus, the existence of the GPD and the ability to reinvigorate the political commissar along with the party committee system will undermine any argument that China is moving toward objective civilian control. As a result, the PLA will remain governed by subjective civilian control in spite of the current advances made towards professionalization over the last two decades.<sup>163</sup>

As advanced by Perlmutter and LeoGrande, and endorsed by James Mulvenon, the PLA is also unlikely to withdraw from politics.<sup>164</sup> Thus, at the elite level, the leadership of the PLA is likely to remain invested in political developments and relevant policy areas. Additionally, while professionalization has increased, the tie to the political system through the GPD and political commissar has not been removed. As in the previous instances of professionalization, the role of the political commissar has lost its influence relative to the military commander. However, should a re-assertion of party control be necessary, it is reasonable to expect that the GPD will once again be tasked to facilitate a re-orientation of the PLA through cooperation and mutual support with the Party Committee system.

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<sup>162</sup> Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China," 16, and Scobell, "China's Evolving Civil-Military Relations," 232–234.

<sup>163</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Chinese Officer Corps*, 73.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

## C. IMPLICATIONS

While professionalism and increasing institutional dependence in the PLA can indicate levels of stability and military effectiveness, the driver for substantial changes in civil-military relations will likely be derived from political fragmentation and a confluence of factors that could divide the Communist Party. In the 1950s, the political faction that favored reform and modernization resonated with members of the PLA that advocated increasing levels of professionalism. Because the desire for modernization and professionalization was sympathetic to Soviet interests and favored continued Soviet interaction, the opposing faction was compelled to reverse the emphasis of professionalization as the PRC's international ties were severed. Likewise, in 1989, the economic liberals that advocated reform and political conciliation were aligned with those in the PLA that valued professionalization of the PLA. Thus, the dominant political faction undermined professionalism within the PLA while confronting the liberal political faction in order to ensure the PLA remained loyal as China faced international isolation.

As the previous case studies demonstrated, the emergence of factions among the secretive Party elite has been subtle and difficult to identify. Therefore, it is important to examine possible indicators of factional struggle, especially as the CCP is preparing for a significant political re-arrangement. Studies that examine possible and potential elite fragmentation often have difficulty reaching conclusive results.<sup>165</sup> However, investigations asking whether the princelings constitute a coherent faction with distinct and possibly confrontational viewpoints or examining the removal of Bo Xilai as Chongqing Party secretary may become increasingly relevant.

Incorporating significant international and domestic factors are equally important in contemporary civil-military relations analysis in the PRC. A shifting geo-political or security environment may be a catalyst of another evolution in civil-military affairs that once again interrupts the professionalization trend in the PRC. Alternatively, a significant change in China's economic development may be the precursor for a civil-military change should a decline in economic growth rates force the Party elite to make

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<sup>165</sup> For a recent example, see Alice Miller, "Splits in the Politburo Leadership?" *China Leadership Monitor* 34 (2011).

difficult decisions on the budget. Without knowing which kind of change is needed, it remains important to accurately assess changes in the international and domestic environment that could potentially affect future professionalization.

With the institutional mechanisms of the Party Committee system and political commissar, the CCP remains capable of implementing drastic change in civil-military relations. Should external factors bring about or exacerbate factional politics among the ruling elite that are also reflected within the PLA, the Party will likely try to re-politicize the military to ensure its loyalty. Should this occur, the constant drum beat offered by top Party officials that emphasize the PLA as owing its ultimate loyalty to the Party will become more than a slogan.

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